Saaransh

In memory of the child, Krishna, I met at a school for the visually challenged, where I worked briefly as a young student fresh out of college (He/His refers to him).

To the Dark One, on this journey around the sun.

I write from observation — not indulgence, not flair.
My life is light: living in and watching the world.
Yet the writing is heavy.
Because someone has to see and hold what hasn't been spoken,
what was buried unspoken,
transfigured,
butchered,
or, worst of all, reified.
I chose to be the one who doesn't look away.
It not just a telling.
It also witnessing.
And it asks nothing —
but that someone else may pause,
listen,
see,
and maybe — just maybe — carry it forward.

as He dreams, ascends, as He flies.

Every act of ours, the loving, the waiting, indeed the living, craves for finality. We pass our days, slowly, in haste, to reach there where Time stands still and our life finds lasting solace.

As our microcosms of infantile, pathological desires crumble into a heap of sand, as we go on repeating ourselves with minor variations, He alone remains – constant, infinite, intangible in His innumerable transitions, from the Beyond to the Beyond.

The Poet too is guilty – of losing herself in the mist of eternal seasons of His fleeting light.

Saaransh.

Saaransh
The Dark One

A "Song-Offering" from the Heart

VANDANA "Imaan"

To Life

The Poet offers love, respect, and gratitude to the souls whose words, like the North Star, guided this humble journey.

Words that, from their first gurgle, claimed the virtue of what simmered within.

***

What other words, we may almost ask, are memorable and worthy to be repeated than those which love has inspired?

Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart
and try to love the questions, like locked rooms ...

Do not seek the answers ...
because you would not be able to live them.
And the point is to live everything.

Live the questions now.

Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it,
live along some distant day into the answer.

Rainer Maria Rilke

It is something to be able to paint a particular picture, or to carve a statue,
and so to make a few objects beautiful;
but it is far more glorious to carve and paint
the very atmosphere and medium through which we look,
which morally we can do.

To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts.

Henry David Thoreau

Invocation: The Kick

To the unborn,
and the women exploited for the womb,
and those who bore and now mourn.

To the ones who tried
to clean this filth
but were shamed into silence.

To the little boys who cry into the pillow
and the little girls who lie still in the dark
till it's over,
and the child that never came,
whose heartbeat I did not hear,

whose breath I did not give,
whose name I did not call out loud.

To the lonely ones who feel too much.
To the ones who never feel enough.
To the body that was never held.
To the dreams that were choked by sleep.

To the ones who wrote letters
and burned them.
To the ones who tried
and were told: "You did not try hard enough."

To those who did not ask to be born,
and still showed up
to work

to pray
to love
to suffer
to create art
to clean the mess
to keep the peace
to hold the fort
to carry the blame
to die beautifully.

May you never know the knowledge of suffering,
and not have to hold this knife of silence in your mouth.

Saaransh began with a dream.
I saw myself pregnant – not in joy, but in shock.
And then I felt it: the unmistakable **kick of life inside me**.
That single moment was so haunting, so visceral, that I woke up shaken.

It felt as if the dream had handed me a question I couldn't un-ask: *What are we bringing into this world – and why?*
I wrote ***The Kick*** the same night – both the invocation and the poem.

From there, the rest of ***Saaransh*** emerged like breath, like fire – as if the unborn themselves were speaking through me.

This isn't a manifesto. It's a voice for the unheard – a lyric reckoning, composed from the deepest part of the ethical self, born from a dream, from a woman who never had children, and chose not to. *Saaransh* is the clarity I found on the other side of that dream. A refusal born not from philosophizing, but from empathy.

Preface

When love flows through the veins, poetry manifests itself. This is how the Poet found herself on this path to realization of something greater than us all, a deeper insight into the ethics that form the backbone of our society, the conscience of our present, past and future – our humanity.

There are various individual journeys within this work – personal and universal, some detailing the grittiness of human spirit, some evocating its frailty; some hidden in symbols, some apparent in the words. And the thread that holds them all is the Poet's attempt at arriving at a nuanced understanding of existence – and, resultantly, the morality behind procreation.

Neither to denounce human life and its achievements, past and present, nor to elevate suffering, but to achieve

a more panoramic, pragmatic and thus just view of the implications that the act of birthing involves, for we bear not just victims but also perpetrators. Digressing from legitimate issues of sustainability, environment and the earth, to keep the concept of consent and informed choice on the balance, to see as to which side it tilts. Not to make the ends the means, but to give the philosophy its merit in scrutinizing the very foundation of existence and separating the moral from the emotional, to shine a light upon this proscribed territory and espouse the cause of the unborn – in a universe that was born amoral and will remain so to the end of Time.

Through this volume of poetry, the Poet invites, one and all, to partake in this journey of a woman toward a unique transcendence: abstaining from the ultimate gamble – of putting at the highest, unalterable

stakes of an uncertain fire what was brought into the world as a token of love, a life.

A journey that brought her precise answers to the most pressing questions and seemingly unsolvable dilemmas of human existence, to deeply reflect on an outcast philosophy and, in the process, be offered the gift of light, through the hands of those she loves most profoundly – children, who appeared at various stations as she traversed this difficult, taboo terrain and guided her as to why this journey was worthwhile, reinforcing the poesy that is this book, the raison d'être.

Embedded in the work are dreams and ambitions; a myriad of experiences; the very many stories of triumph and defeat, their euphoric moments and also the disappointments left in the wake; the unrelenting

cycle of sufferance and creation, with its days of glory and of waste; lived tragedies and their tears of blood in vain; and ultimately, the reason for being and becoming.

While the role of struggle, integral to life, in actualizing all human endeavors is beyond doubt, what is worth questioning is the 'human' right to subject an as yet unborn life to it when there can never be an informed consent, when one can never be certain as to how that created life will unfold, when that 'gift of life' can turn into a burden, and in many ways, a curse, a debt, which the then born has to pay through this journey.

That there is an immoral wager involved where the one pawned has no power to refuse or opt out. One only has to turn one's attention to the issues of euthanasia and

suicide to understand that many, many of our fellow-travelers want a way out, whatever be the reason, and that how high that mountain of denial is, from society, family, religion – to not have the right to be asked and then not even the right to one's own life. And this is what the work does. Question.

Since what follows is an outpouring from the heart, for the cause of all those who have and still suffer at the hands of life, the Poet sincerely apologizes to each and everyone of them, centuries ago, and now and in future – to be forgiven, for their pain. Coupled with this is an offering of solidarity, of understanding, of empathy and compassion, of believing in the right to life – to live as humanly as one can and also to let go on choice.

The Poet sings, in these song-offerings, of those who, despite agonizing suffering, showed unbelievable courage

in adversity and those who found rest in oblivion. Although they remain anonymous here, but by sharing their lives, long and short, they paved the way for *Saaransh* (The Gist) to become what they wanted it to be – a view from the fringe, of driftwood and stardust.

Beyond these words lies an appeal to the mind and the heart – let not the unborn be chafed by the vicissitudes that invariably cut open even the most resilient of skins – to let them be, for the sake of that love and its light.

Vandana "Imaan"

A work of love dedicated to tiny palms and innocent eyes, the ones who kept poetry alive.
Twirling shadows of colors, defiant, ecstatic, alive against a Himalayan sun.

∞

The River

I

Leitmotif
The Worshipper
Personal God
Eternity

II

The Woman
House of Cards
Icarus
Nostalgia

III

Darling Red
The Kick
Song-Offerings
Gift of Light

∞

The River: To Ganga, the One that consumes everything – our sins, our fates, our births and deaths, our entire world – to become water.

1

Leitmotif: To the strugglers trapped in realities that are all mirrors and smoke.

The Worshipper: To the divine that resides in us all but is seldom found.

Personal God: To the lonely – through life or through death, left behind, abandoned, bereaved – to the imaginary friend in grief.

Eternity: To those desires that remain unfulfilled, to dreams crashed, to lives cut short, unlived – that devolved into an eternity through accident, death or disease.

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The Woman: To the exploited, children, men, and women, for the body, for the mind, for the soul – at the hands of the familiar, the stranger, of society as a whole, scarred by the rampant, ostensible streak of fetishization, dehumanization, and commodification of humans by humans, pervading all life aspects, in schools, in workplaces, in markets, in homes.

House of Cards: To the victims and survivors of wars, violence, rape, human trafficking, prostitution, betrayal of trust, and gaping wounds and recurring trauma beyond the skin – to one's integrity.

Icarus: To the dreamers and their only safe place to be – sleep.

Nostalgia: To the courageous who found the strength within themselves to move ahead and beyond.

III

Darling Red: To those dreamy, dark eyes bereft of light – ones that, beneath their lids, retained the most virginal sunrise.

The Kick: To the unborn and the women exploited for the womb, as an apology for the human actions that disregard their most profound rights, on body, on life – from something as seemingly benign as pregnancy, to societal pressure and rallies against abortion, to the horrors of surrogacy and the abject mockery of poverty and needs in this whirlpool of human emotions and parental rights at any and every cost.

Song-Offerings: To the children who kept poetry alive, through life's very many vagaries, to become this – Saaransh.

Gift of Light: To the eyes of these many lives witnessed – the beacon that guided this philosophical inner journey, this transcendence, this gift of light, for a kinder humanity.

Before I said no to Life, I said yes to Words …

Krishnakali: A sincere tribute to Tagore, for this long journey – that culminated in a visit to his land, his Thakurbari, but had begun when I was a student, who found Genesis in his words, abandoned once among dusty shelves, only to be finally brought home.

"In wildness is the salvation of the world. Perhaps this is the hidden meaning in the howl of the wolf, long known among mountains, but seldom perceived among men."

Aldo Leopold

Summer of Confession

A billion stars go spinning through
the night,
glittering above your head.
But in you is the presence
that will be
when all the stars are dead.

Rainer Maria Rilke

The River

Displaced,
I could now look back at the contradictions
and illusions of this unfenced country,
between civilization and the primeval order,
just one step away
from the Edge of the Abyss.
An impossible beauty She was,
the indecipherable code of existence,
where the great tangible melted into the mythical
as the naked rock breathed out a strange sigh:
pure,
raw,
fearless.

As if She was only waiting for my arrival:
quietly, like an assassin,
whose patience knows no limit.
From such a state of distilled silence,

a blistering madness creeps out,
on the verge of things,
to bore into the very core of the stone and choke it –
to make it speak.

The past is a heavy weight to carry when
my reflections only have the fading light to rest upon.
A sane death would have honored them,
my silvery caricatures,
if only they could then stop at the threshold of my being.
But inexpiable guilt is their only fate,
and amnesic perpetuity,
my terminal truth.

In this unforgiving storm, Her inward waves are benign, accepting.
The hour of redemption draws near ...

Her ripples,
like dreams coming up for air from the lost depths
of the subconscious,
conjure flashes of a lived life,
of nondescript streets where my feet first
learned to walk.
The images come and go,
easily, painlessly,
like letters on an invisible page,
and I am left with echoes of their dying footfall.

Through Her,
I have come to worship what is untamed,
broken yet untouched:
a constant flux that reduces all differences
to the most gracious act of sublimation, to mercy.
Her splendor assumes the rich singularity
of the vast Nothing –

satiating every human thirst with the elixir of un-becoming.

Before the holy fire and the rising smoke,
straddled between a dead language and
a millennial desires of hope,
I watch centuries' old incantations compete
with incense to saturate the waters below.
As my feet etch an entire existence on the white
sand of Her banks –
the Leveler that consumes all,
the living,
the dead,
their significant, insignificant glories and sins,
and their inevitable fall;
the ever-rising wisps of new breaths,
untold stories
and then silenced ashes of the ultimate call –

this is what the Edge tells me:
to wash off with her infinitude
the absurd stain of living and finally become Her.

Out of the clutches of infinite niceties
and their hidden morbidity,
the Exile rises again:
the elemental, primitive rush
that comes from gazing deep into the
night of the Abyss
now knows that its time has come.
The sun decides to take leave,
vanishing behind the mountains that
have risen
from the insides of Her womb –
layer after layer scraped,
to give form and shape to that loftiness,
that height before which I stand upright,

bowing to the Invincible,
to the One who knows only to flow.

As my final offering, I cut out my heart –
for Her to enter and ravage me,
just as madly as she did
when I met her for the first time:
with her selfish, wild, relentless love.

The humble certainty with which I watch Her
develop inside me watches me back –
a depthless mirror it becomes,
where the Edge transforms into a whole earth,
the one I belong to and She does, too –
reaffirming our ancient pact:
that when all ends, to return to Her.

And here I am.

To confessions, to desires, to this day and its night.

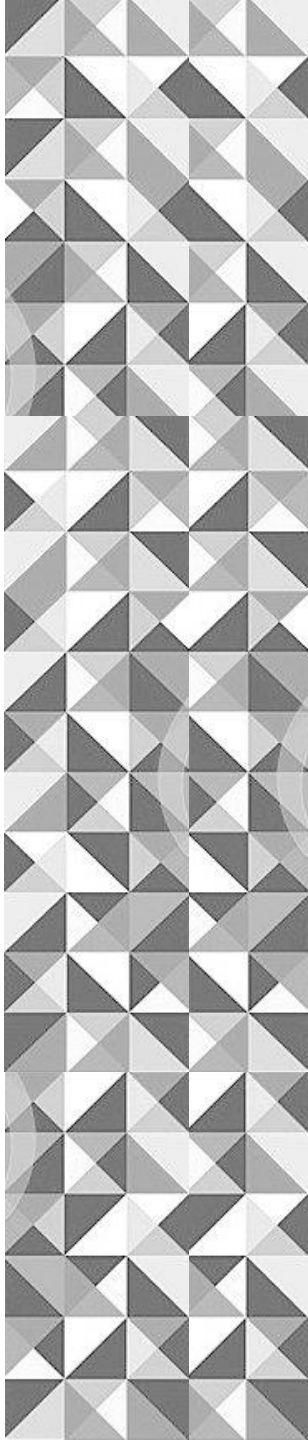
Autumn of Innocence

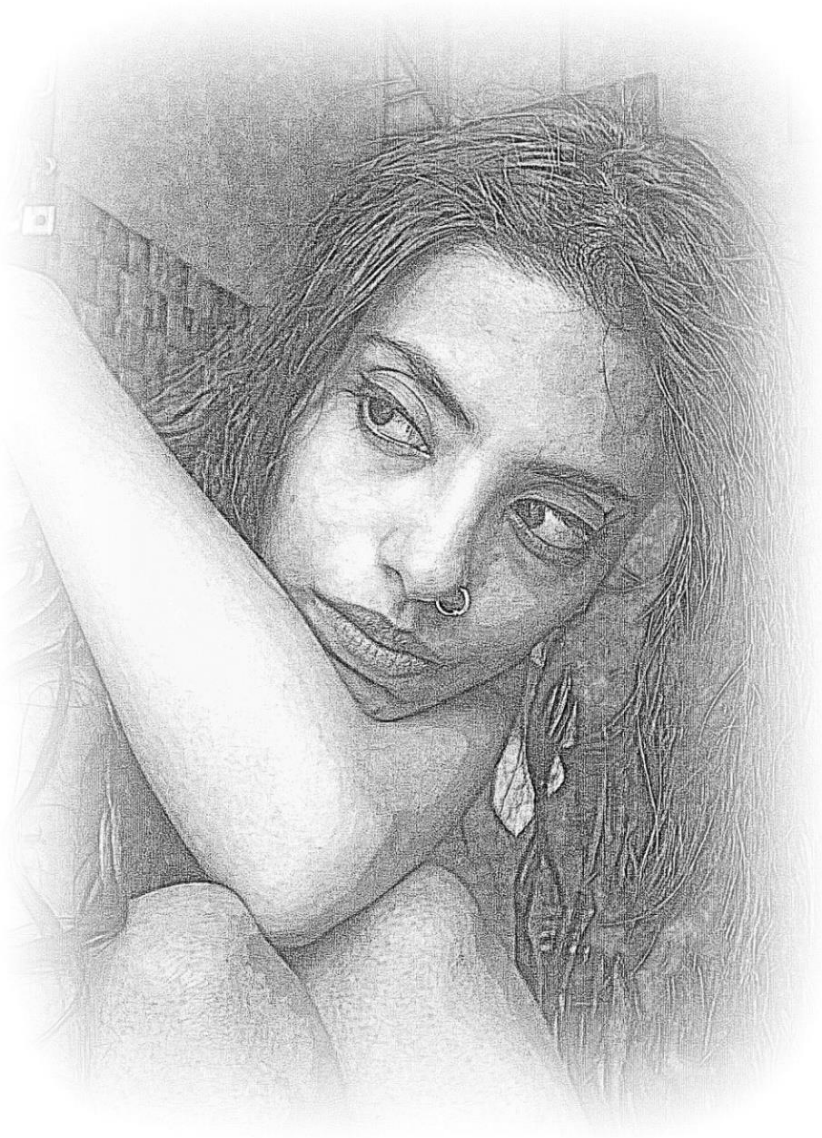
I

May whatever breaks
be reconstructed by the sea
with the long labor of its tides.

So many useless things
which nobody broke
but which got broken anyway.

Pablo Neruda





leitmotif

Words have the power to intrigue.

Words have the power to deceive.

Few things have ever held me captive, and none as strongly as my self-created ghosts. Sometimes, I feel they and I are not separate; the same blood that flows within me, traverses their dead veins – reinforcing, resurrecting the shadows of my poesy. Like a requiem for those words.

It is strange when I look at them now – through the distance of space and time. They seem not to have aged at all. If anything, we have grown younger, my ghosts and I.

In a way, I am like the earth I live upon.

Everything finally returns to me – smeared with the sacred dust of oblivion.

And this return has come after a lifetime of thirst – of my ghosts, for meaning.

When a parched earth cries out in pain, the echo never dies. The air traps it, forever. A fearful heaven may send rain soon after, but the curse remains – hung above the red dust below, inside bubbles of an exhausted existence, unfulfilled. Like the ghosts of the Dream.

The earth knows it all. Nothing ever fills.

Except may be words. And the leitmotif, within.

***

The Dream has a singular power.
It can own us.

In a recurring passage of birth and rebirth,
I often find myself at the
beginning as well as at the end,
two souls of me, together,
waiting for the Dream
to start once again.

Across the threshold stands my childhood,
with its own universe of innocent games.
When I extend my hand
to touch it,
to feel it pass through,
the mirror talks back to me:
My birthplace is calling out –

with a trembling hope that I will come,
where awaits the name I abandoned;
where lives my last wish – to be forgiven.

Release me.
Release me so that I can dream again.

The childhood is a leitmotif
of my cluttered life.
It begs escape, which suddenly comes
at that uncertain juncture where
the abstract merges with my living reality.
I surpass.

I come out of the mirror.

To the far side sits my youth,
unaware of the simplicity of the very act of

breathing,
of yearning,
of meaning...

But today, I feel divorced from that fellow-voyager.
I look deep into the mirror that has me
as her captive –
to see if some reflection will betray this truth
which lies buried under my vain pretense.

The mirror remains impassive –
no lingering thought can burn through;
it stays unmoved by my waning light,
even as the white marble glows in the receding
twilight.

Carried on the slow pace of the translucent moon,

I can trace the inscription on the nearby tomb –
the marble is saying things
I could never say.

The youth is a leitmotif of my unlived years.
It demands recompense,
but can I redeem what I have lost
while caught between the Self and the Dream?
I surrender.

I go back into the mirror.

The Dream has a singular power.
It can own us.

I become it; it becomes me.

The Worshipper

Pedestal.

There is something uniquely alluring about it – yet the idea that one can fit it to corporeal dimensions seems almost grandiose. That there is a form, part human, part divine, that can adorn it, in dusky hues.

The long parade of fine clothes and pretentious eulogies I, as a bystander, had been witness to only evoked a silent lament, reflections upon reflections – shadows unaware of themselves, ruthlessly, relentlessly fighting to outdo the sun.

Among metaphors that had created my monochrome realities, an inexplicable acerbity was reducing all borrowed sophistries and symbols to an indecipherable code.

Was there a fine line between the Real and the Illusion, one that disrupted the comfortable practicality of living to rise up to the firmament – to become what one worships?

Or was it just an ocean of grays, a reluctant remorse for not trying?

Just an unspeaking paranoia? A faceless window that never gazes in? A fiction? Or was it the Truth?

Damnation or Salvation?

Betraying the shades of a most intense anxiety, every stroke of the pen fed it – like the vanity of an acquired, adolescent taste that had refused to leave.

Thus transported into a semantic infinity of being and becoming, it was here that I found her, out of the rising trappings of an unremitting odyssey, within to without, for a personal history – the Goddess of the Worshipped.

***

She still remains to me the woman who blew the conch.

With the first rays of the dawn,
her breaths would bring
the sleepy shell
to life.
The scent of incense,
flowers and

her washed, still wet,
loosely tied hair
would fill the room –
the Worshipped had spent an entire night
waiting for this moment to come.
A match would be lit,
devouring the dark space,
and soon serrated edges of the heavy moon
would smoothen,
like butter.

In this limbo of creation,
where every superfluity had already been
shed,
the conch would intimate
her arrival.
The stillness of the dry, thirsty air

that had been impressing its claws
into a deepness
unbeknown to the dark skin of the night
would break –
her footsteps
making her presence known,
real,
contrived,
like a theatrical setting.

Taking off the sheets
that had clothed
the world
in the hours of darkness,
a faint curve would appear
on one of her cheeks,
as she would gently draw
the curtains

to let the sun in.
An unconscious emergence,
untouched,
unscathed
by the paring confines of
space and time.

The Worshipper had suffused
the barren terrain,
as old and lonesome as eternity,
with this one sound.
Nothing could now desecrate;
an ancient holiness was bestriding
the scarlet sky.

Past the veneer of forgetting and living,
I can see her,
through cracks that have developed

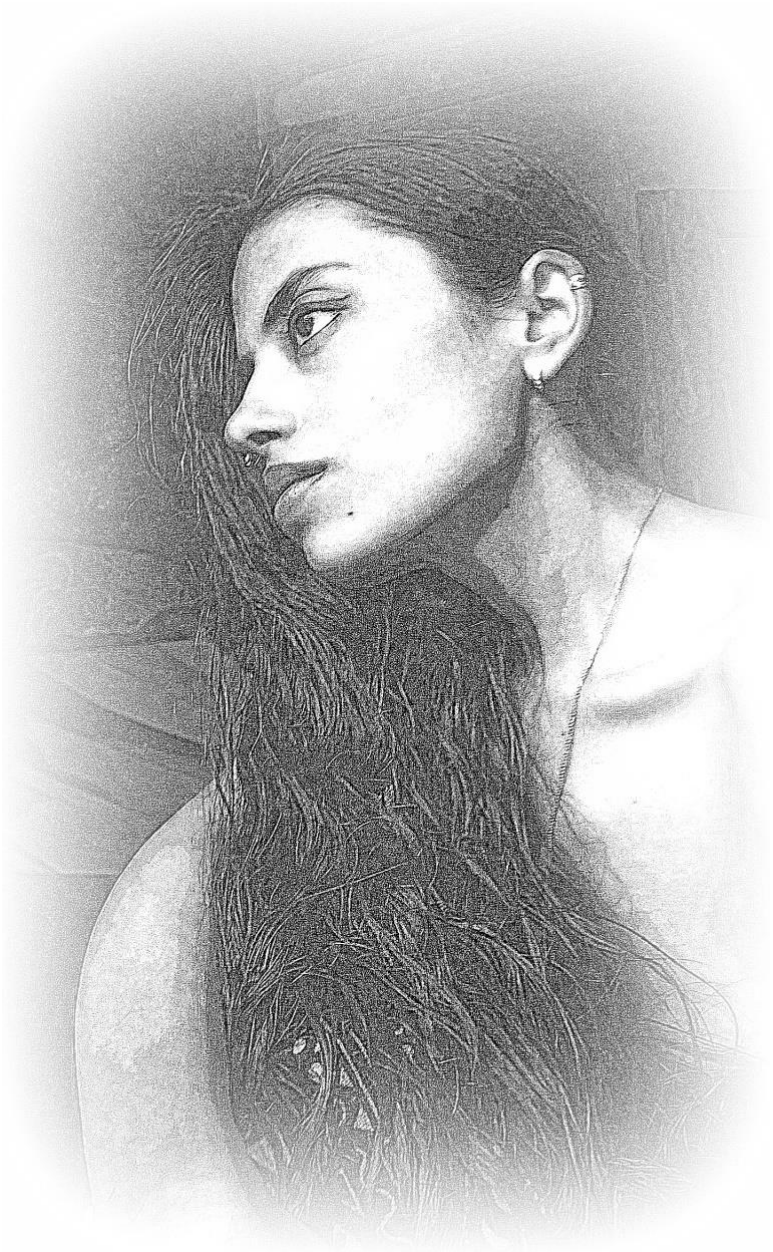
over time.

Once again, she raises her hands
– the conch pressed close to the lips.

The reverberation.

...

The entire world deflates
into an atom of non-being,
a relic of sand and dust.
The pregnant air drowns everything in it,
the room,
the flowers,
and me.



Personal God

There are stairways to success, to heaven and maybe even to hell. And then there is the stairway to god. Or if you will, a personal god.

Trying to be kind to everyone gets your own identity shredded into a million little pieces. Each trying to find its long-lost part. Crawling toward one another. Sometimes, two fragments do find their way to each other.

Still, this is less painful.

Trying to be kind to oneself – now that is the absoluteness of the absurd, for one lives alone in a world of wounds. There aren't any of those lost pieces strewn across the floor.

Yet something is to be made whole.

No crawling, no reunion.

Only acceleration.

Down. Down. Down.

Toward what? Toward the river that flows within. One that is the vicious eye of the never-ending storm as much as it is the divine motherly lap of peace.

As there never was any heaven above to listen to my prayers, big and small, unuttered, I devised him out of nothing – that personal god.

He filled me up – like the sound that fills the air when wine is poured into a glass. That faint, satisfying, life-affirming trickle.

This journey to the bottom of the glass can be too long without delusions, a hard road till the end. But then, I had him as companion – the Deity of my earth.

There is something about the mind.

One rests there long enough, and the desire to leave vanishes. Not because the view inside is stripped of all brutalities of that outer existence.

But because the inner sanctuary lets one be.

Only when this ever so precious, ever so fleeting peace arrives does He manifest.

***

I have stood at your door,
holding a million words,
strewn into a string –
to bind to one beating heart,
but today, I have come
to offer them, one last time,
at your feet:
some dried out,
some still alive,
and some, unborn.

The storm raging outside
intermixes with my own,
running across my face
like lines on an empty page.
And those words I hold
start to fall down:

like pearls,
one after another.

Quietly, I watch,
as the river below gathers them.
Just like I carry you,
inside,
outside,
in the darkness of the skin,
on the edges of one slippery mind.

Do you remember what I said to you
in the quiet of the days gone by?
Or the gentle dream I drew for you
on the canvas of that May night?

This room I now live in

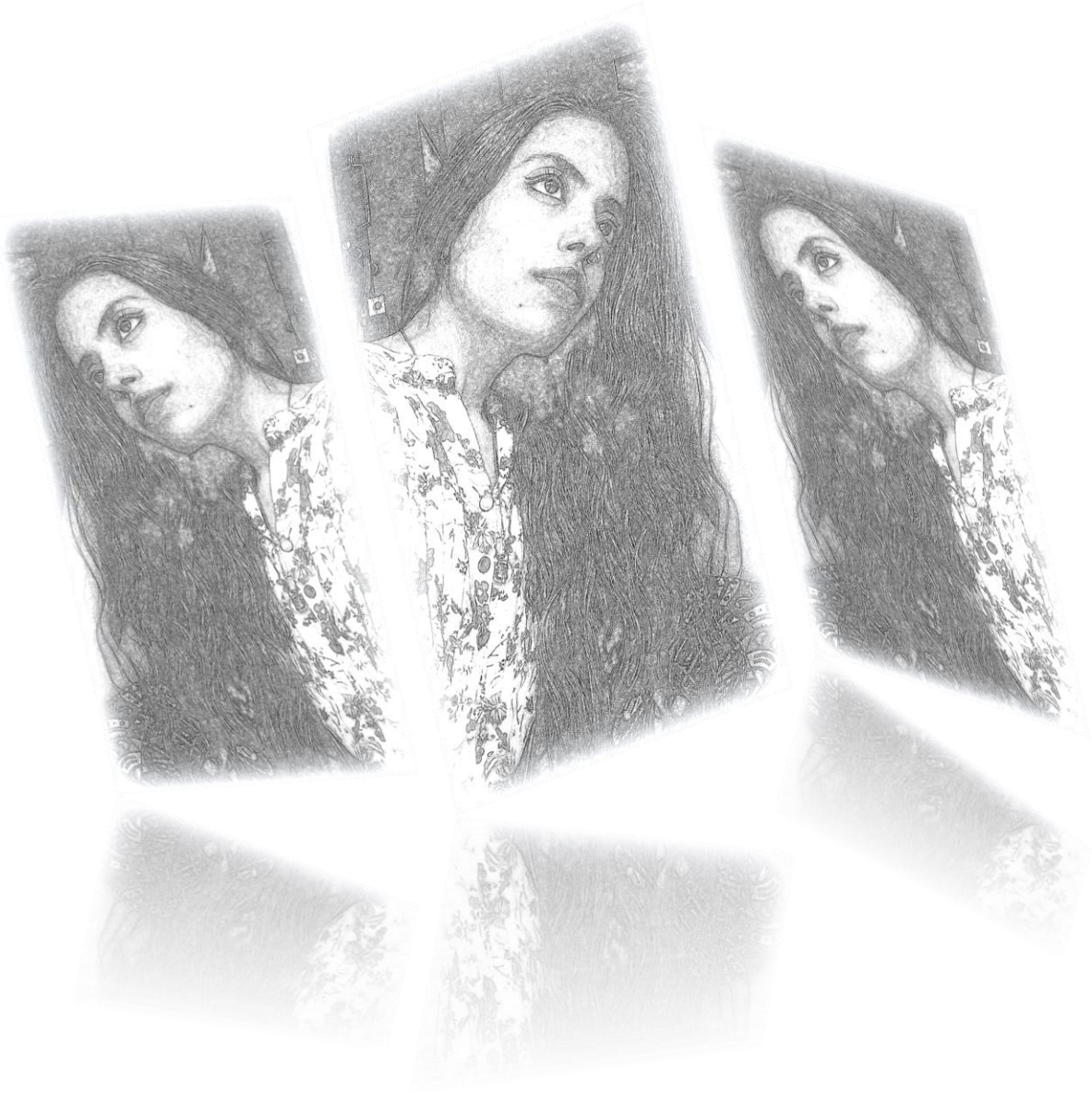
is bigger than where I was born.
I wanted to imagine you here,
but I hesitated.
There are temples. And then, there is home.
I stole you from one of those places
and brought you forever
into this room –
Next to the window, where the waxing moon
filled you with light.

Sometimes,
in the middle of our conversations,
you would start to laugh,
unaware that with every strain,
those fallen pearls returned.
And with them, slivers of my soul.

Memories are like traps.

Some unforgiving,
and some unimaginably kind.
But mostly, they are life.
If one were to ask, what is the most treasured,
I would reply:
the night you brought in the thunder and rain.
That there are grains of sand I have saved you in,
to fill up the desert, the eye of my soul.

A million words
like letters to a soldier, now dead, at war.
The beloved writes, religiously,
one pearl after another,
knowing yet forgetting he cannot read,
will never reply.
I stand at your door – with those same
million words, and the storm bellows inside.



Eternity

They say mirrors reflect only the Present.

But what if I saw Eternity?

Every day, since then, I have stood before it. Searching inside it yet failing. Years have passed, but I can still feel that moment when the mirror captured Eternity.

Her mirror.

A petite frame with long arms, holding and devouring me at the same time. I must have looked like a child, or maybe a child-woman – with a small nose and tiny feet. She called them flawless. And I, I still laugh.

Had I known that everything that has to go wrong, will, I might have been saved.

From that unbearable lightness of Being, which rose like a phoenix from the ash and captured Eternity.

Saved, from life and the death of it.

For some, their ambition is handicapped by laziness. But ironically, on afterthought, mine was handicapped by itself.

She listened very carefully, almost like in a trance, when I first told her. Looking deep into my eyes, her face was a sculpture, beautiful but dead – utterly ignorant of the gravity of the moments passing us by; of the significance of that confession, the first in many to come; of the woman whose entire existence was to crumble, brought to its knees, choking, pleading.

One glimpse of an emotion on that face and I would have stopped. But it was placid, like a sleeping lake. And that gave me a free leash – to let the soul soar.

The delicateness of the circumstance, with the night starting to bloom into a starlit, dark, open sky, emboldened me, before this stranger – was she to render true a never-lived dream?

Confessions have a strange allure. Those words, then conspiring, had a strong hold on me, yet I was unaware at the time. The night developed wings and flew away, but here I am – still waiting for release, laughing at the odds that did me in. But, most importantly, at Eternity.

***

I thought it was silver,
or maybe white
– the color of doves,
of peace
of a pure love.

If I close my eyes,
I can clearly see
every strand of hair:
from the one braving the wind,
to those straying onto the nape;
just below the shoulders,
meandering, on their way,
down to the waist,
moistened,
as I sucked that lone drop of rain;
the slight heaving and
that half-shadow on the face.

Could write in a verse
the mystery of the curves,
how endearing was
the asymmetry of the breasts,
the way that corner turned up
where the two lips met,
through which flowed a certain
madness – a laughter –
when I pointed it out;
I think it should have
been red –
the color of desire.

Of all the sentences
that came out of her beautiful mouth,
I am a victim to only one.
The air was warm, our breaths synchronized –
and why wouldn't they be!

I was playing the game
and she was fast asleep.
I think it should have
been green –
the color of spring.

I wanted to arrange the plate;
the food was growing cold,
and then,
there was the ticking clock, too.
Everything reminding me
my time would soon be up.
That there is always an end to
the mirage.
But from where I was hung
my feet couldn't touch the ground.
So, I asked her to find a mirror.

I think it should have
been purple –
the color of union.

Nostalgia is a hard breed.
I can't seem to kill it:
Smothering won't work,
forgetting is not possible,
and living with, is deception.
Existence,
the struggle to capture
one more breath.
The petite frame,
the long arms,
the lightness within –
my rope was tightening.

How could I wrest it
from the mirror:
captive,
fighting for what comes easily
to most?

I thought it was silver,
or maybe white
– the color of grace,
of forgiveness
of the milk of life.
But it was the color of –
Eternity.
Reflection reflecting itself,
and her
and me
and our one world – unlived.

To memories, to stories, to a dream that feels right.

Winter of Despair

II

Wave of sorrow,
do not drown me now:
I see the island
still ahead somehow.
I see the island
and its sands are fair:
Wave of sorrow,
take me there.

Langston Hughes

The Woman

She was a beautiful woman; full of youth's promise, with eyes that made you reach out to the stars and find God's own province.

There was something extraordinarily simple yet exquisite about her – one moment, she would ignite the surrounding air with her impassioned sighs; the next, she would sing the sweetest lullaby, putting to sleep the accumulated pain of the day's toil.

I wish I knew the way to her heart, where somewhere deep within, the most delicate whispers grew, only to come up and fill in the expanse of those eyes – a million stars, her own personal sky.
To know her would take a lifetime, or one honest moment – a sort of transcendence – to know oneself better.

Yes, she was capable of magic. With the claws of the raven. With the generosity of the Divine.

There was nothing she couldn't make possible. It seemed she was born with many selves, each one trying to manifest itself through its journey. A Janus with numerous faces, one for each season. Witnessing her flow swiftly like the river, I marveled at her destiny – the woman who was the journey.
And then, one day, she was eaten alive by the lust of depravity.

A broken dream, a broken heart, a broken soul, which she tried to bandage with her one sad, broken smile.
She still is a beautiful woman – empty of youth's delusions.

Her eyes now shine with a better wisdom, the ones that once shone upon God's heaven. Now, they light up my half-broken soul.

***

The sea was bellowing
again today.
I could hear the waves
from my room.
The walls, drying,
which had painted a cerulean blue
yesterday,
still held me inside: to escape.
But it was never easy at nights,
when the moon stole in
through the window
and captivated the mind.

Once more, the lashing of the waves
breaks open old wounds,
and unconsciously,
I make my way to the sea.

"You always come too soon,"
she said.
"Why, you never let me win!"
I smiled.
"The Artist needs an audience,"
she smiled back,
through her dancing eyes.
"Yes," I said. "But I don't like their faces."
"They breed contempt."
I continued:
"They are empty."
"Sick, rotten – they come to you:

to be frivolous,
and happy and young."
She only nodded.
"They mock at you,
from their high station:
these petty gods stuck in muck."

The air was silent; the sea, laughing.

Are you jealous, my love?"
she asked, teasingly.
"No. Just hurt."
"You give yourself up,
without anything in return ..."
"I have you," she said:
innocently,
quietly,
solemnly.

"Yes" was all I could admit.
with regret, with remorse.
And just then, the sea returned.

I do not know where the night went,
where the roar of the waves:
but when I opened my eyes,
I saw a vermilion sky lying on the shore,
exhaling,
a thousand lives, a thousand doors.

I walked back to the room,
to the emptiness that awaited me
there:
like the lover, like the wife.
And on the quiet wall,
I found a lone footprint
where the paint was still wet.

House of Cards

As her years aged into a morass of signs and shadows, a damning indictment rose to the surface: values had become cheap.

What was a world of exquisite ambition, turned out to be a house of cards. Of lies, deceit. The echo of an irredeemable loss.

Nights on nights, spent in confessing. Desires and dreams. The poesy of magic. Came one gust of wind and everything vanished.

Inarticulate sounds from her panicky throat had gathered about, watching her pick up those scattered pieces. There was only one constant – desperation.

That and cards, fallen, on the ground.

The hours asked her if it was all worthwhile – to keep alive that vision, that sense of life when a grey desert of patchwork motifs filled her emptiness with its own reflection of nullity?

To burn herself in a delusional hope as the monopoly of this world's base realities was busy suffocating the last flame of her reverential morality?

The commonplace was no more confined within the four walls of domesticity. A godly corruption had pervaded our inner lives. Almost imperceptibly, it had betrayed its own capacity for self-deception.

Watching this phantasmal reality gather form right before her eyes, trampled, she could only achingly wait.

Wasn't contempt too easy against such vacuity,
where all meanings, purposes, potentialities had
dissolved?

When the crude decadence of lust and power had
exalted revenge and apathy to virtues, what was left
for her, to worship? Yes, today, it was too easy.

***

Wherever the eye looks, it sees contempt;
for the order of things,
for this benign life.
A contempt that grows on itself,
year after year,
like a grave that gathers dust,
to be, one day, consumed by that very dust.
And in that space of nihilism,
the eye meets her alone:

nobody lives there,
nothing flows.
A house of cards it was.
A gust of wind.

The open desert can no longer breathe;
Her richness,
in time,
in space,
in silence,
in light,
in the fullness of being,
has been betrayed;
the moon, eclipsed,
in a displaced reality, now ripe.
Every physicality of recollection,
every solitary pain that seared through the chest,
every shared pleasure

has now been surrendered:
a sinister desolation
runs through her arid wasteland
and suppurates the nocturnal air.

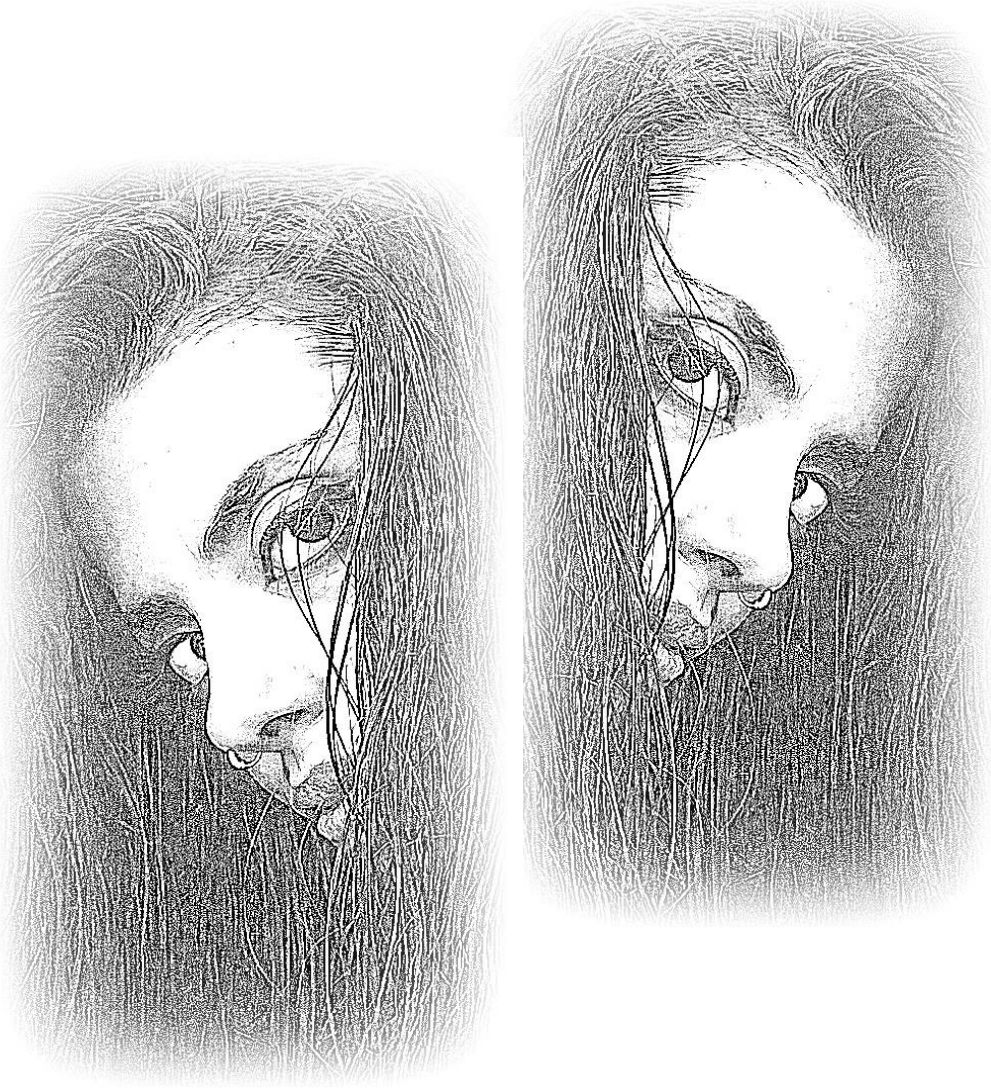
Where once lay the most singular faces,
red blisters of sand and rock,
unbeknownst,
there, an alien presence is now closing in:
queer, alive, impatient.
A Neolithic sky tries to comfort,
yet the stasis trembles.

Her vast aching beauty of bareness
has been eaten up:
She has no hope of salvation.
The malevolent hunger digs deeper still,

and scrapes out what remains
of her scattered ruins.

Watching her gather remnants of her being,
desperately,
the inescapable truth stares me in the face:
She too had loved all things that flowed.
The rarity, the madness, the sanctity is gone:
a savage blindness has taken hold,
reducing that beauty to mere possession.
And as the cancer of human vanity
keeps her corpse alive,
the living heart of my desert is dying:
No one will ever see again what she saw,
what she built.

Only a house of cards, a gust of wind.



Icarus

To go through so many existences to finally find the one life you actually want to live.

Youth harbors several ill-defined, half-imagined yet brilliant notions, which at the time appear to be our soon-to-be-actualized futures. That's the beauty of youth – so, so ignorant of what we call 'life'.

And mine was no different. With years' long, arduous process of daily, mundane wear and tear, most of those notions lost their sheen.

Except one.

I thought maybe this was to stay. After all, we are all allowed one dream. This was to be mine.

But as is the nature of all existences – it interrupted this reverie, forcing me to let the shining sliver of light lie dormant, hidden from view as years caught up – of routine, of a monotonous sense of non-being.

Once in a while, the sleeping Dream would come up for air. Watching it take deep breaths, almost hyperventilating – the ever-constant cycle of inhale, exhale – was the one joy my universe could afford.

It was during one such session of struggle that it all began to unravel – always already decided by unknowable elements of Nature – the unintended sale of the Dream, piece by piece, in the marketplace of glass eyes and plastic brains.

***

A name was cut into the skin,
a slight swelling
and a sweet pain –
that was the emblem the Dream chose,
the first time,
and there were many more to come.

A little girl had suddenly turned
into the woman she was destined to be,
and the name,
now a part of the skin,
was to reveal to her
what all would come to pass.

If I were to say there would be tears,
and laughter,

and silences,
and long, unending days of hope,
of pain,
of regret,
it would be a half-truth,
too commonplace.
What that girl found
beyond those myriads of existences was
something otherworldly,
someone exceptional.

At the other end of the dark, winding tunnel,
from one face to another,
one story to another,
one life to another,
He was waiting,
knowing she was on her way home.

...

Soon, without intending to search,
she was scouting –
a way out of the mountains,
the rivers and forests,
the auburn trail of never-ending seashores,
and all the while the poetry inside was growing
restless,
somehow containing itself from bursting out,
piercing, like light, through the wall of dormancy,
the carcass of her living years,
to live once, one final day.
But it wasn't time.
The road was yet to meet its curviest bend.

They say,
just before dawn,
the sky assumes its darkest hue.
Hers was the color of blood,
and it felt delicate, graceful,
like feather,
like a thousand rays.
The barred light of the Dream,
caught in waves of a tumultuous sea,
had finally found its haven –
one that was to anchor it.

Riding those same waves,
poetry flowed out,
released,
ecstatic, celebrating.
The years lost their weight;

all accumulated fears torn asunder,
dismantled.
Only He, He lay ahead.

She could hear the piano keys being touched,
a certain sensuality oozing out
through every pore of the body,
making it come alive
for the first time.
Like a melody being birthed by some consummate composer,
the Dream was beginning to fill
the air,
the sky,
the parched earth below.

Life, it seemed,
had found its lasting song.

And she, she flew with it,
toward the valley of Hope,
where everything was tinted with its color.
The barley fields, golden, kissed by the sun;
the playful river, bluest, of the most virginal love;
the innocent smiles, untouched by trials of the
born.

...

Sometimes, all it takes for the Dream to stop is
waking up.

Or Icarus.

The burning Moon.
The irredeemable Fall.
A thousand rays melting her waxen wings,
her ashen form.

The road had ended;
the light was gone.
The marketplace of glass eyes
had become quicksand:
pitch-dark,
and mired in, she could no more fall.

Breaths were becoming shorter;
the dark phantomized.
There was no sound, only palpitations,
and two eyes wading through,
the smell of charred ashes –
of hope, of the soul, of defeat.
A tired Icarus wanted to sleep.
And it came – gently,
closing the eyelids of the Dream –
a dream-child that she could keep.

Nostalgia

In search of immortality, it fills blank sheets with questions, fears and humiliations, the unaccepted defeats, and petty successes, yet nothing really fills the void.

To finally live someday, it kills a part of itself every day, dumping hoarded thoughts and emotions in a world that is already glutted: minds empty; libraries, too full.

Nevertheless, it goes on and on, creating, destroying, and yet again creating a solitary life in these crowded cities that forgot it, forsook it, even before the sun had left the evening sky.

No wonder, respite doesn't come: this assurance that it had at last lived.

Its certificate of faith is yellowed, tattered, subjugated, and yet it dreams of a new fabric, of absolution, of freedom renewed.

So what if the tedium, the treadmill of years long gone eat away the edifices of short-lived illusions; it still will re-create its own prison: the unbroken reverie of an ever-lasting youth.

It dreams. It ascends. It flies.

A most peculiar thing nostalgia is. One learns to live with it only by losing it.

***

I sit,
surrounded in a room
full of faces,
some of which I own,
some I found –
on footpaths and back alleys,
uprooted,
half-naked, half-sunk
in the ground.

They were faces of people
I had known,
sad, happy,
each carrying a past
to disown.
Like shadows
that left silently
through the door,

they were pieces of the Self –
long used and then thrown.

Among them,
caught unawares,
I see reflections of all these lives
and a strange air of nostalgia
grips me:
those faces begin to stick to my face,
and I feel compelled,
compelled to breathe.

This sudden escape of trapped wind
from my lungs
awakes a stranger nearby:
she too had been sleeping there;
her back turned to me.

Yet I can sense a feeble trembling.
Hurt, she is crying.

So, to comfort her,
I begin to walk ahead,
but the heaviness of my faces
makes it impossible.
One by one,
I start to take them off.
Though the more I try, the more they grow.
Thus boxed up in my own faces,
where every face is silent
yet every silence cries,
I feel compelled,
compelled to speak.

A single word breaks out from my pursed lips:

Why?
But the air is reluctant to carry it;
she drops it
midway.

Down there,
lying dejected on the ground,
the word loses its sound,
gobbled up by the crawling noise
of my silent faces.
Without the word,
I cannot reach her.
Just then, she turns around.
Her head is lying low,
the hands, restless –
searching something
on the ground.

Watching her in such
pitiable state,
my faces begin to detach
and fall down,
without a sound,
on the floor;
she looks up thus, but there is no face –
a hollowness stares back at me
and then picks up one of the faces to fit it
in.
I feel compelled,
compelled to laugh –
for now I am the one without a face.

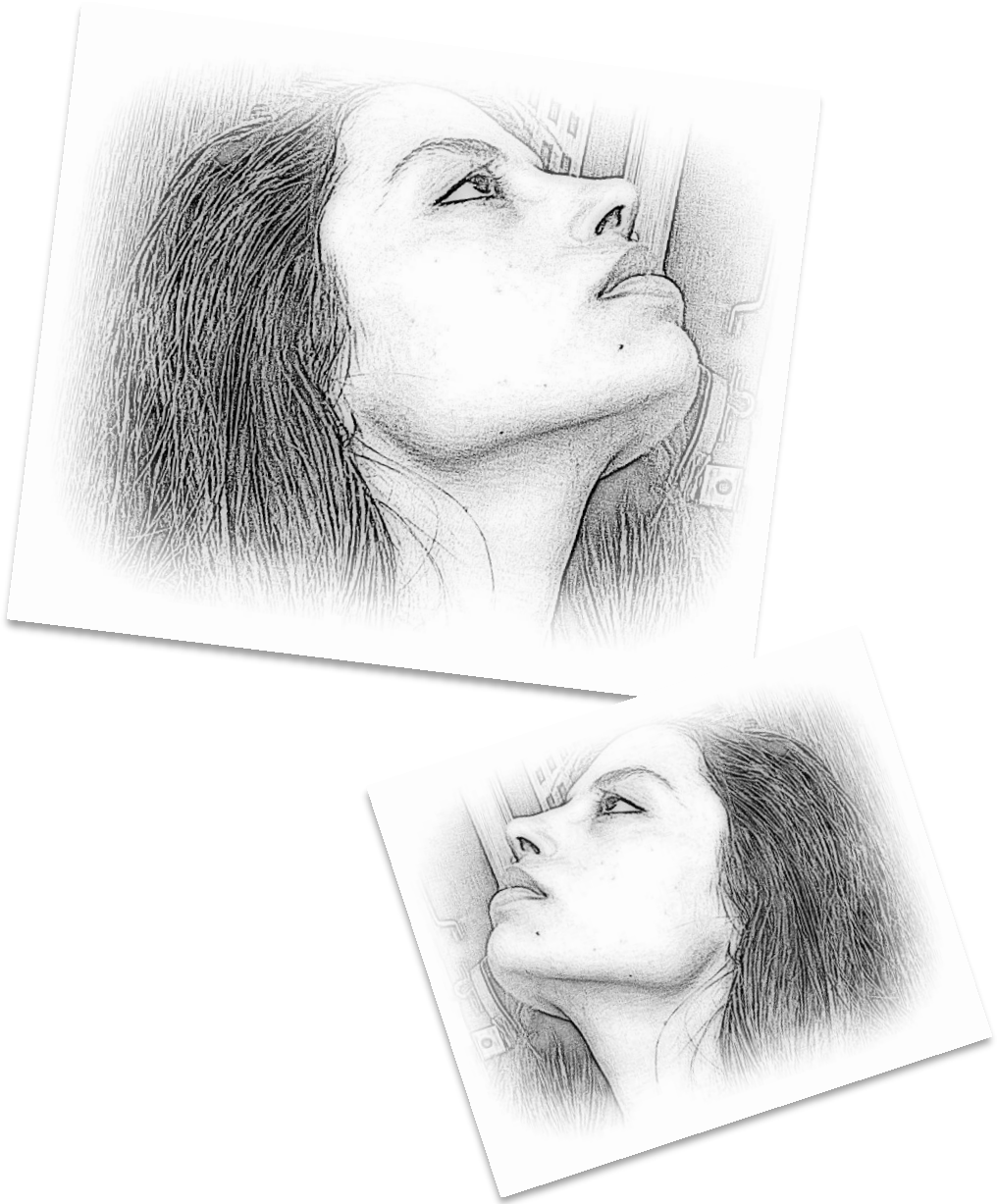
To colors, to music, to a love and its light.

Spring of Life

III

Then all this became history.
Your hand found mine.
Life rushed to my fingers like a blood clot.
Oh, my carpenter,
the fingers are rebuilt.
They dance with yours.

Anne Sexton



Darling Red

He remembered the color red.

Since I came to know him, roses have always looked the same, felt the same, smelled the same. Like soft sun-kissed cheeks, tiny palms, and smiling eyes. The eyes that never let go – the color red. And a lifetime of dreams. And memories, of touch, the slight prick, of sight.

Since that morning, as they sang the prayer with me, surrounding me – the out-of-tune voices, all in unison, asking the heaven for blessings, for a sane heart and a saner mind – roses have retained the one shade, of childhood.

Why? Because that is all I have of him. The boy who remembered red.

When a young heart breaks, it is hard to sew it up into a whole again. And while he was brave enough to move on, I was left stranded, in a sea of questions, too big for my age, too small for an entire life.

If there is a love that tints everything in its own color, then it is his.

Krishna, the Dark One.

To have felt an infinite love in one single moment, and never again. My heart was bleeding the same red – that colored his tiny palms as he closed them, with rose petals within. Velvety, covered in dew. Like stars, like tears.

Filing up, in zigzag lines. Beautiful, young throats.

Tender, innocent lips. Offering transcendence, to the ground below, to the sky, unknowable.

There isn't a more sacred feeling in the world. I stand at the precipice, watching Time flow by, but the music is still here, hung in the air.
Simmering, outlasting the decades. Filling up the valley, the mountains, the abyss.

From a helpless trembling emerged the most courageous heart. One that colored my earth red.

***

As a faint fragrance flows out of him.

In a round plate,
between the neatly placed vermilion,

sandal, and an earthen lamp.
I scatter a few flowers from the dawn.
Like an offering of songs
To Krishna, my Dark One.

Watching me from a distance,
with his doe-shaped eyes,
he tiptoes into the temple and picks the red one up,
asking me if it is time for the prayer.
Can he sing?
For there is the flute, waiting.
Waiting for the Deity to descend.

Before I could answer,
he pulls my hand,
and places the flower

in the middle of my palm.
When I ask him,
"Won't he offer it himself?"
he starts to walk away,
toward the flute.

"It is for you."
He suddenly turns to say,
and then rushes back,
to be gathered within two open arms.
"Hide it, for Krishna might steal,"
he whispers, shyly,
planting kisses on my cheek,
as a faint fragrance flows out of him.

From such innocent words,

a spitting image spurts out
and fills the heart,
within, the world,
without:
Of the herder of cows,
Of the flute-player.
The Eternal Lover,
The Enchanter.

And thus he gushes forth,
an infinite love,
carried on petals of red,
swallowing me,
and the air holding the morning song,
the temple, entire,
and Him,

the Great Deluge,
the Soul of the Universe,
the One with lotus hands.

...

On the shore of an evening,
still wet from lashing waves of years
gone by,
the wind is faintly singing,
for a setting sun,
far into the horizon of an unseen time.

My eyes,
ashamed from watching the sky,
with its heart cut out,
gaze down,
toward the whiteness below.

Something is clinging to my feet,
almost as if struggling
to conquer the vast blue ahead.
I watch it being swept away,
a little distance into the sea
only to be brought back to me
with the next wave.

An eternity can pass by in this child's play,
but it is time to go home.
I turn back and the earth turns red
as a faint fragrance flows out of me.

The Kick

Power.

That is what it was.

And love.

One kick. And it changed everything.

Suddenly, the Past found meaning. The heart, its song.

I once heard someone speak on the radio. I was untying the bun to let my long curls breathe after a long, tired day.

Just when I had placed the pin on the mantelpiece, he spoke: "To love is to learn the song of the heart, and sing it even if the heart forgets."

And that is what it was, a reminder to the heart. The answer to the Question, the rising sun that birthed a new dawn – lifting, with its first rays, the unending expanse of the dense fog that had descended on life.

Kick.

Now, there was no darkness to wade through anymore, searching helplessly, furiously, for my lost sense of being, for my lost voice, for my lost song. I was, finally and forever, found.

The dark tunnel had evaporated. Transmuted into a bolt of lightning.

No more free-falling. He was standing, near the end, toward the beginning, on the path where the dark found its light.

Broken worlds never stopped one from dreaming. Two sleepy eyes and a game of breaths is all it took. This was my world – a lifetime of borrowed dreams. And from one such pregnant dream, He was born.

Saaransh.

***

Power.

Power and love.

From one dream to another,
like pages of a book being flipped.
The familiar,
much loved smell of paper,

drowning the nausea
of not knowing.
One reaches the end,
of the book,
of the dream,
of one's yearning,
and still, the Question
remains.

And with it lingers
the dread that
it will start all over again.
And it did.
Again. Again. Again.
Until
the Kick.

There was no fire,
there was no heat.
Only a strange fullness,
a feeling complete.

Since that still evening
I sat tracing
the fine outline of the lip,
an auburn smoke fills the air,
for the moon was burning,
burning the inside of me.

With its touch against the skin,
I watched it grow,
tighten, swell,
with hope,
with desire,

racing,
breathing,
next to me.

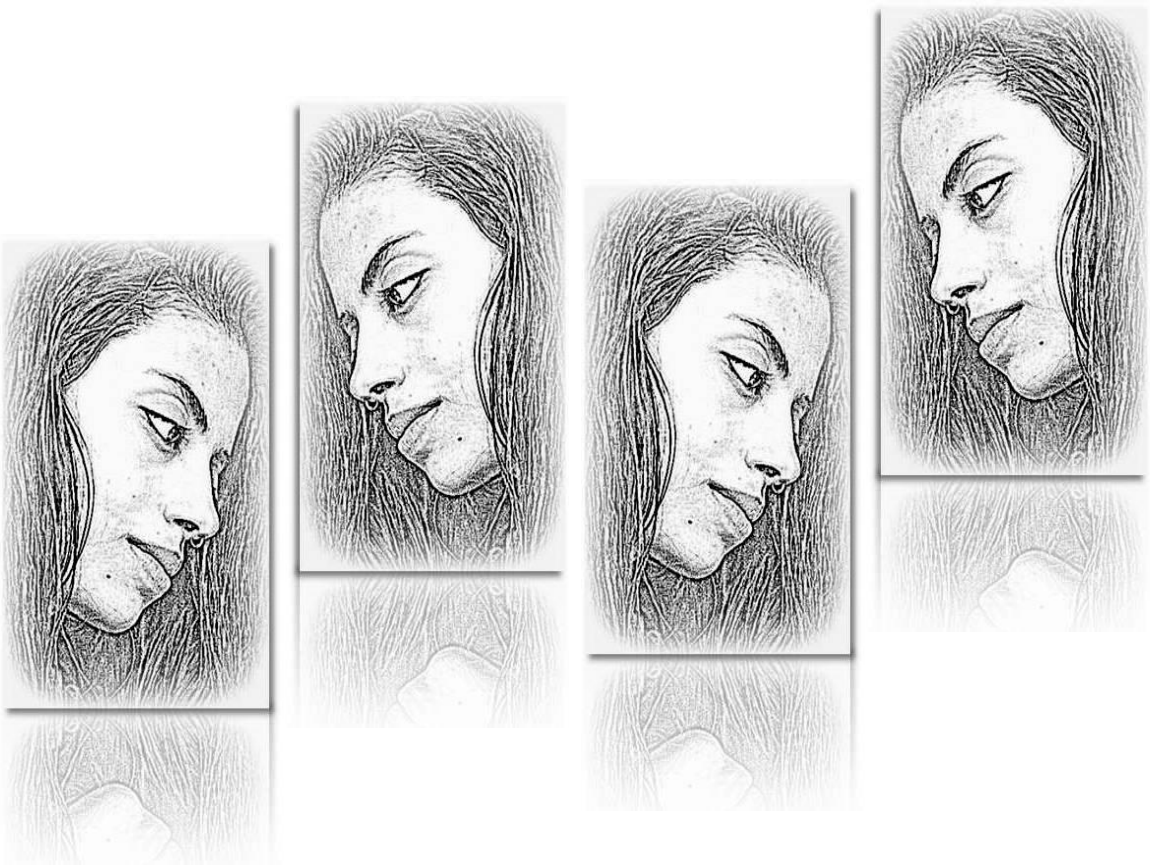
There was no fire,
there was no heat.
The moon was yearning,
yearning every part of me.

To this twinkling night when we revisited
the storm-laden sky
it had left long ago,
quietly,
shyly,
on feeble tiptoes,
the moon was churning,
churning the last tide of the sea.

In the quickness of the fingers
against the soft spread of
the silk,
in ecstasy, in delight,
in the rich waves
as it touched the brink,
the moon was learning
learning the way to become we.

There was no fire,
there was no heat.
Only a strange fullness,
a feeling complete.

The moon was returning,
returning into the womb
of the free.



Song-Offerings

Like a traveler, I had knocked at every door on the way, hoping for a day of rest.

The weary eyes strayed, near and far, not knowing that I was to be found through them.

They came to me when I was sinking. Resuscitating me with their breaths, these fonts of life birthed glad wings, spreading out in adoration, in love.

The drowning poesy was miraculously saved, singing its heart out, offering gratitude in return to this infinitude, ineffable.

It is strange how our fates are determined, from the day we are pulled off the umbilical to the night that finally grants us the never-ending sleep.

A cosmic chain of cause and effect.

That life had given me a moment's indulgence – to watch a rising sun cast a scarlet glory on their faces, to pursue the music of this unknowable river of laughter, fulfilled, blessed.

That I was a wayward remnant of an autumn cloud, empty, lost, far from the rains of the spring. One touch of their tiny hands and I was gilded with gold, pregnant with love's purest melodies.

When I look through the prism of Time, I see lines, intersecting. Some reaching far ahead; some cut short. Some wild; some tamed. I also see the path that brought me, the Vagrant, to them – the line that cleaved my existence into two halves.

One half became a promise to Him, and the other,
these song-offerings.

***

Out of the depth of an ocean of myriad forms,
some feathery,
some carrying years of dead weight,
a long-lost harp was brought
back to the earth,
by love's most delicate tendrils.

A bud opened up
on the barren womb of the harp,
baring the way to the heart,
where a thousand notes lay waiting
to be strung into a garland,

glorious,
radiant,
as an offering to love.

Watching this majestic resurrection,
the golden canopy of a morning sky
poured down from above,
like drops of honey
quenching centuries of thirst,
and the harp's lips began to tremble –
a song was being born,
a voice was to be heard.

At this brink of infinity,
with pasts and presents heaving like
waves of the sea,
the broken strings became whole once again –

harnessing the vagrant spring breeze,
to ride once more and conquer the silence
of the yearning blue within.

Words that till then
were trapped in the recesses of the mind
began to ooze out:
slowly,
adamantly,
as if the lone piper was calling out to them
from the labyrinths of
the heart's balladry.
Thus freed, and eager to live,
they started to weave,
on the blank canvas of the ocean,
a portray of experiential tapestries.

Like the pang of separation
that makes the expectant night
grow tender by the hour,
gasping breaths arrested
this final moment before the long-coveted
embrace;
and in ecstasy,
the harp cried out,
filling the bosom of the heaven above
with her lyric of desires,
deepened into the sweetest pain
of loves,
of grace.

...

Unceasing,
spilling over a rich milk of splendor
on the waves' multitudinous
existences,
the song plays out,
as the eventide gathers fires and shadows
and melts them
into the ascending twilight.

The harp returns
to her promise, to her heart:
with many a beat.

Gift of Light

Rilke was speaking to me again.

That how, some distant day, I will live along the answer. That within a locked room it lived, and one day, I will find it. And I did.

Through a musical poem of light, dreams and vivid faces, the Essential had revealed itself, saturating the entirety of the Being with an abundance of tenderness. Like a wildflower.

As sublime, as gratuitous as birdsong, I was offered a manna, a sound of 'redemption' through pulsating waves of laughter, of gathering, open arms and their loving embrace. Love today was testifying to the infinity of its omnipotence – reinforced by this harmony of colors and forms, patterns and rhythms, spanning the seconds just as much as the centuries.

The subterranean expanse of my fetal dreams was dissolving quickly into this accidental cascade of emotions, into this song of love.

Discordant thoughts, doubts, questions, everything liminary between being and becoming, immanence and transcendence, had now turned into a scintillating reality.

And basking under this reality was the answer to eons of soul-searching, for meaning.

To the far side of the dark tunnel, past the Eternal Lover and all yearnings, the conch blew once again, in salutation – a synthesis of worship and the color red – the Gift of Light.

***

From the vantage point of the human
condition,
high above the worlds of desires
and of symbols,
the Songster was watching the grand procession
of the Serpent pass by,
and there,
perched on its eternal wings,
while the other larks flew from
field to field,
I sat, waiting for it to sing,
the song that would break the darkness
that the earth below
had made.

Plagued by the duality of life and death,
of sufferance and creation,

the masses below continued,
in madness,
deaf and blind like puppets,
sacrificing one and all to this
vicious circle,
this inevitable catalogue of misery,
and yet many more, snatched
from the realm of
the unborn.

As if witnessing this once was not enough –
dejected, I watched
yet another wave of humanity
swell before me,
foreshadowing:
the cycle repeated itself once again,
inflicting more bodies to the pyre
burning dreams,

hopes, hunger, thirst, and ennui,
to the very many ignominies of existence,
the very many banalities.

In this stillness, the air,
heavier with the rising smoke,
with the question that had kept me
awake at nights, asked:
Why this unending sacrifice?
This worship of the Serpent devouring the eye?

Atop such blank uncertainty
that was pervading the purple sky,
only the Songster knew –
that in its melody rested the absolution
that was salvific,
that ethicized.

And thus, it stood there,
holding high commune
with the kindest spirits of Time,
in an organic unity with itself
and with the worlds outside,
to usher in a dawn that its Light had divined.

...

With the first note, the floodgates opened,
and the ground underneath was swallowed
by an absoluteness that released the unborn
from the clutches of the night.
No more refracted illusions –
no more you, no more I;
no more sacrificing of the living, of the dying.
Only an old Songster singing on this new terrain:
one that birthed the Gift of Light.

To the First Light

Krishnakali

Stories have their unique charm.
They weave themselves as we stand
unaware.

Unannounced,
shyly, they capture our hearts,
our minds,
and then never go away.
That's how powerful stories are:
some the heart wants to tell;
some it wishes to forever and ever hide.
Infinitesimal stories of love,
full of oracle and miracle,
of memories,
and blessings, and dreams.

Between the yesterday of a moth-eaten childhood

and the earth of tomorrow lay hidden an infant
story of a pink world
sunburned,
to red,
to dynamite –
the one I dug out from the sunk landscape of the
plateau,
to let it breathe a full sunshine.

An odd assortment of stained glass pieces it was:
of innocence and fragrance,
of honey and cream,
of music and poesy,
of happiness, of home, sweet home.

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Tears couldn't be dammed today.
They knew the earth so well.
Before the red house,
as guards manned the iron gate,
they turned the already wet earth wetter.
For they knew, it loved the taste of rain.
Gathered from the damp cheek,
and now held in embrace,
they were His own doing.
He wanted to be present.
Not in body or soul,
but in His words,
in His songs,
in this land of old.

Of course, He was going to have His way!
He had been calling her for so many years now ...

How could she take away what was long due!
This misty offering,
this first meeting with the Worshipper new!
Placed next to the plea to be let in
was Bengal herself,
in multicolored bangles,
in the sound of dhaak,
in sindoor khela and Durga's face,
in puchkas and meetha paan,
in Howrah, in heena, in Kali's gait,
in rosogulla, in sandesh.
How could,
how could,
how could He stay away!

Where once He stood, she was standing today.
Not much had changed:

the sun was still the same bride in her vermilion glory,
the stars, in their moonlight.
The elapsed time between the two had shrunk into a kaleidoscopic continuum;
the stained glass pieces, a prism.
Through them, He could see there was only one color coming out:
from her, from Him.
The one of purity – the emblem of white,
saturating the earth,
the air,
the entire realm of existence,
which was now ascending toward the Paradise.
Lightness. At last, lightness!

Even Ganga couldn't resist this fated union today.

With her tinkling laughter
and cascading waves,
she welcomed the pilgrim on her final pilgrimage.
Her music was slowly resuscitating the past
century
from its death slumber.
Gulmohar had spread its crimson fire everywhere;
its million lanterns lit.
For He was finally here.
Alive.
Calling, 'Krishnakali, come home.'
And thus they danced, arm in arm,
the two lovers,
singing,
laughing,
remembering.
Just the way He wanted.

Amid this merriment,
a little boy was watching her mother from the
smallest of windows cut out on the wall of her soul.
How the face shone!
He knew it was her love for him –
the love that made her travel those thousand miles
since the night of the dream.
Sometimes scared,
sometimes adrift,
but always whole, always with him.

He could see in her,
as she danced – with her feet, with her eyes,
the same six year old
pestering her Maa about a city of joy, a city of gold;
the unexpected bribe of chocolate and candies,
of a sweetness, packaged, sold.

Of a garland of arms, of the father's love –
His footsteps in distant lands,
and the child's dream to retread.
Of the juvenile hate for her grandfather's white
dhoti,
of his smile that spread out every morning,
entangled between the folds of which lay
the little girl's thrill of anticipation –
of the daily ritual,
of their bicycle ride to school.
Of that silly envy behind the desire to be a boy,
of the brother's blue birthday suit,
and her futile yet persistent attempt to fit into.
Of swings and games,
Ah, the saccharine laughter of Spring in its
myriad plays.
Memories, such memories.
They all were here today, to celebrate,

surrounding on all sides,
these rays of light filtering through the colored glass.
And yet a little distance away,
glittering from beneath its gilded cover,
he could also see an offering to the Divine,
of words sublime,
trickling down from pages like a tapestry of tears
of grace,
honest,
solemn,
bold.
The moment of genesis he could now see, in
retrospect,
the fluttering pages and the writing within,
the seed that bore this trinity:
him,
her,
and poetry.

The River knew this dream-child like its own heartbeats.
Tied to the echoes of a legend old, She had watched him grow big,
from the first movement in the womb to this day as he witnessed, through the eyes of his mother,
the house of red and its singing canopies tear apart
the stubbornness of the iron hold.

Clasping an entire ocean within her closed palms,
the mother bowed down and offered her little boy –
her second soul.
In gratitude, in honor, accepted, owned.

***

In disguise of a pain, sudden and cold,
an omen of fate it all was – the journey of a
Krishnakali, born from the eye of faith.

The blackness of the kohl is but symbolic,
a mark of the man who lives within.
The fine grit rubs on, like touch,
gentle, controlled, owning yet owned,
on the dark skin,
a reminder of presence, of his power to
hold.
The nights, the days,
the friction, the embrace.
Rising, subsiding, engulfing, consuming.
A crescendo, climaxing, like waves of silk.
Smeared by his fingers,
seeping within,
the permanence of him deep inside of me.

Many thoughts, like flying grouse, leave no trace of their passing,
but some leave clues that outlast the decades.
He who, in some forgotten April, planted this lilac must have thought
pleasantly of blooms for all the Aprils to come ...

At the tip of each bud of tomorrow, preformed, poised,
awaits another spring.

Aldo Leopold

Love is an elusive territory that no map can chart.
There is neither hope, nor prayer to guide us except the synchrony between two beating hearts.

That and an absurd faith.

To a love and its light

Yes, I know, this is nothing but thy love,
O beloved of my heart —

this golden light that dances upon the leaves,
these idle clouds sailing across the sky,
this passing breeze leaving its coolness upon my forehead.

The morning light has flooded my eyes —
this is thy message to my heart.

Rabindranath Thakur

The Dark One